

**Education Cabinet**

# **Environmental Education Certification Program holds graduation ceremony**

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Kentucky Environmental Education Council (KEEC) Executive Director Jane Eller awarded diplomas to 13 nonformal environmental educators during the third annual certificate graduation ceremony on February 28 at the Holiday Inn in Elizabethtown. Graduates of the program included cooperative extension agents; zoo, public forest, library and park staff; and others interested in teaching about the environment in a nonformal setting.

"This commitment (of mastering the course) is made for yourself and for all of the people you will work with. When you go back home, you will be doing things differently because of this program," said Dr. John Hug, a renowned environmental educator and key note speaker for this year's ceremony.

Hug, a resident of Grove City, Ohio near Columbus, has worked in the environmental education field for more than 60 years, including 22 years as a consultant to the Ohio Department of Education, and has authored several books on environmental education. Hug's interest in environmental education began when he served as a patrol leader in a Boy Scout Troup.

During his remarks, Hug told the graduates to be concerned with environmental learning, to be an environmental steward where you live, and to help others live environmentally responsibly so

everyone understands that their every day decisions make a difference.

"Kentucky has one of only three standards-based certification courses for environmental educators in the nation, so we have been real pioneers in this area. These graduates are to be commended for completing a rigorous program that other states are looking to emulate," said Eller.

"This certification program began in March of 2004. Until then there had never been any specific preparation to be an environmental educator in Kentucky. Ours is the first course-based, standards-aligned program in the U.S. And now with our third graduating class, we have 83 certified environmental educators," Eller added.

The three courses that make up the program are based on national guidelines developed by the North American Association for Environmental Education, <http://www.naaee.org>. Five major assessments are required to be certified including an essay that covers the 14 readings, a debate that looks at various sides of current Kentucky environmental issues, a comprehensive unit of study, and a test of environmental literacy, <http://www.state.ky.us/agencies/envred/documents/ContentGuidelines2005.pdf>.

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The KEEC, an agency in the Kentucky Education Cabinet, was established in 1995 to improve Kentuckians' understanding of the environment. Their mission is to provide citizens with the knowledge and skills they need to make their own informed environmental decisions. For more information on the certification program, visit <http://www.keec.ky.gov/> or contact KEEC Executive Director Jane Eller at (502) 564-5937, or by e-mail, [jane.eller@ky.gov](mailto:jane.eller@ky.gov).